

The Southern League.

LUTON v. PORTSMOUTH.

Played at Portsmouth on Saturday. Result:

Portsmouth	1 goal.
Luton	nil.

The teams played as under:—

Luton—Goodge; Turner and McEwen; F. Hawkes, White, and Pritchard; Eaton, Ross, Lamberton, Moody, and Barnes.

Portsmouth—Harris; Bowman and Young; Digweed, Baick, and McDonald; Salter, Cunliffe, Lee, W. Smith, and S. Smith.

Referee, Mr. C. C. Fallowfield (Streatham).

It will be observed that Lindsay and R. Hawkes were absent from the usual side Luton have turned out in recent Southern League engagements. Lindsay had been called home to lay the last respects to his mother who died at West Hartlepool the previous Thursday, while Bob Hawkes remained at home for the Bedfordshire Cup-tie v. Olarence. Naturally, Pritchard was placed in the half-back line, and little misgiving was caused on this account. But the sudden vacancy between the uprights was not so easily filled. Farr, of course, was entitled to the position, seeing he has been the regular reserve goalkeeper all the season, but then he was the only player qualified for the cup-tie at home for that important post. Therefore he felt bound to remain with his comrades.

As it happened, Goodge had been registered as a Southern League player, and although he had practically retired from football, having only turned out on a single occasion during the present season, he readily consented to fill the breach. It will also be noted a change had been made in goalkeepers on the Portsmouth side since their visit to Luton, inasmuch as Thompson had been replaced by Harris, who was looked upon as a reserve at the commencement of the season.

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Portsmouth won the toss and played with a rather stiff breeze at their backs. Still Luton were the first to get dangerous, through a well-judged pass by Moody to Barnes. The latter was pulled up by Young, but he succeeded in regaining the ball, and gave Harris an opportunity to save, which he did in good style. White also put in a nice grounder, but Harris made no mistake and easily got it away. At the opposite end Steve Smith sent across a square centre but Pritchard cleverly held Cunliffe off the ball and only a goal kick resulted. It was anybody's game for the first ten minutes, and after Lee had placed the ball well over the bar from a good position, the Luton forwards were once more in evidence near Harris. Both Lamberton and Moody tried shots, which, however, were too high and did not cause Harris to use his hands.

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Lamberton was rather badly fouled by Young, but the free kick came to nothing. The first corner fell to Luton, following good work by Moody and Barnes. The latter took the kick and the ball came out to Ross, but he could not quite get control, and it was got away. Steve Smith got going at the opposite end and caused Goodge to fust away at the expense of a corner. This was well saved by Goodge, but a second corner was ultimately conceded.

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A few minutes later Goodge proved his coolness by catching a hot shot from S. Smith when that worthy was well placed. Indeed, right through the match Goodge kept his head marvellously, and a stranger looking on would have been surprised to learn that he had had practically no experience in big games. Lamberton caused a diversion by getting well in with the ball, but Bowman blocked the shot and returned the ball down the field. At this point Luton were certainly having more of the play, and indirectly this led up to their downfall for the ball came out to Salter not far from the half-way line, and with the Luton defence well down the field, he had almost a clear course to the goal. He drew in towards the middle of the field before shooting, but his final shot gave Goodge absolutely no chance and travelled at a tremendous pace into the extreme corner. This happened after play had been in progress 28 minutes.

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Right away from the re-start Moody almost equalised with a clever attempt right in the top corner of the goal, but Harris, who evidently at first judged the ball was going wide, eventually tipped it over at the expense of a corner. Again Lamberton appeared to be right on the spot for an equaliser, but he was brought down in such a manner that a penalty would have been pretty certain if the incident had happened at home, but the crowd made no demonstration, and the referee's attention was not called to the offence as at Bristol.

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About the last exciting incident previous to crossing over was a clever run through on the part of Salter, but Goodge robbed Cunliffe from close range and thus earned the thanks of his comrades, for the opening appeared rather ominous from a Luton point of view.

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Upon returning, Portsmouth at once attacked and forced a corner, while just after S. Smith made one of his characteristic runs, bringing the ball well up, but Turner came to the rescue and prevented him getting in his centre. Luton retaliated in a manner not at all to the liking of the spectators Moody almost heading through from a centre by Eaton, but Harris, who was very partial to giving corners, put over. Again Barnes put in a fine attempt, which Harris got to in a truly marvellous way and brought off a lucky save. Immediately after a shot from Eaton was kept out at the expense of still another corner.

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Salter then took the ball through and gave Cunliffe a fine opportunity with a judicious pass, but Goodge quite surprised the natives with a single-handed save when apparently beaten, and Turner cleared. Immediately after Goodge brought off another clever save following a brilliant run through by S. Smith, while he kept out still another good shot by tipping over a drive from Lee, which came rather unexpectedly from close range.

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Portsmouth hereabouts were very dangerous, and took a couple of corners within as many minutes. The second of these was well placed and was only cleared with a certain amount of good fortune. Indeed, the ball struck the underside of the bar and rebounded into play within a yard of the goal, but someone got it away and danger was averted. Barnes now once more asserted himself and forced a corner off Bowman. This he placed himself, but Harris brought off a good save without getting the ball clear, and Barnes put in a cross shot which looked a certain goal, for it came at an awkward angle, but Harris was not to be beaten and punched the ball away over the heads of the attacking forwards. But the attack at this end could not be kept up, and, chiefly through the agency of S. Smith, the play was once more transferred to Luton territory. Goodge, however, kept his head, and, catching the ball from the left wing, he was not to be forced through, although Lee tried his best to bundle him over.

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With only a quarter of an hour to go, Luton had the most promising opening of the match, through a mistake by Bowman, which allowed Lamberton to get clear away. The Luton

centre-forward travelled goal-wards at a great pace, and when some dozen yards from goal he let drive, but the aim was too high and the ball went over, greatly to the relief of the crowd, who could see an equaliser all the way from Bowman's miskick.

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Following this let-off, the play veered round in favour of Pompey, and S. Smith, who was causing Turner considerable trouble, again drew in with an open goal, but instead of shooting he passed to Cunliffe, who was not more than three yards away from goal. Goodge, however, came out and bundled the Portsmouth player over before he could get his shot home. It was a wonderful effort on the part of Goodge and fully deserved all the cheers the crowd generously gave him. Five minutes before the close Goodge prevented S. Smith from netting when he appeared to have the goal at his mercy.

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Luton still stuck to their task of equalising matters, Eaton forcing a corner, while White gave Lamberton a nice pass along the ground, and the latter only missed by inches, this being about the last effort on either side which looked likely to influence the result. Thus the game finished with the narrowest margin in favour of Portsmouth, and the players can congratulate themselves upon the best performance Luton have ever made on Fratton Park.

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Possibly the single goal win was deserved on the play, although it was admitted no one could have grumbled if the points had been shared, Luton being good for at least a goal. Long before the close any fear the rest of the team may have felt on account of the absence of Lindsay had fled by the masterly way Goodge dealt with all the efforts of the Pompey attack. Never at any time hurried, he kept his charge perfectly, for it was an utter impossibility to save the only goal of the match, and thus his display could not have been improved upon.

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Turner and McEwen naturally gave him great help. It was remarked Turner had never played a better game on the ground, and it will be remembered that he played for Portsmouth two seasons. The way he stuck to Steve Smith had a most important bearing on the fact that no goals came from a left-wing effort. The half-backs also did wonderfully well in holding the dangerous Portsmouth forwards. White quite negatived Tee, while Pritchard played a fine defensive game against Salter and Cunliffe, only allowing the former the one chance to get away which resulted in a goal. Fred Hawkes has now had considerable experience against the brothers Smith, and the fact that they were less in evidence than usual at Fratton Park speaks to the effectiveness of Fred's play.

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The forwards were triers all the way, but Buick and Co. did not allow them to settle down as in some previous games recently, and this rather spoilt the combination; otherwise it is difficult to account for the blank score-sheet, as many times it looked as if Harris would be beaten. But each time it was more a result of an individual effort than a combined run. Moody, however, fed Barnes finely on occasions, and it was simply the good judgment of Harris that prevented a goal at least twice from such work.

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Harris has quite made himself the favourite with the local spectators, and our old friend Thompson will scarcely get back in the team bar an accident to the present custodian. Of the Portsmouth pair of backs, Young was decidedly weak, being by long chalks the worst of the four playing. Bowman, however, played grandly, doing the work of his partner at times. Buick, as usual, played finely at centre-half, while the chief part of the attack devolved upon the Smiths. Still, Salter made a most promising debut at outside-right, and will probably be persevered with.

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West Ham did surprisingly well in defeating Southampton by 2 goals to 1, and New Brompton made a very good show at Bristol, where they shared points with the Rovers. But the matches in which Luton were chiefly interested were those in which Swindon and Millwall were engaged. The former were badly beaten at Northampton—by 5 to nil—but Millwall succeeded in making a draw at Park Royal with the Queen's Park Rangers.

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The following is the League table up to date:

Goals.

	Plyd.	Wn.	Dn.	Lt.	For.	Agst.	P.
Bristol Rovers	23	14	5	4	46	23	39
Southampton	23	14	5	4	41	22	39
Reading	23	15	3	5	46	26	39
New Brompton.....	25	9	8	8	34	28	26
Portsmouth	21	12	1	8	43	35	25
Tottenham Hotspur.....	23	9	7	7	35	23	25
Brighton and Hove.....	24	10	5	9	33	25	25
Northampton.....	21	11	2	8	35	33	24
Plymouth Arville.....	23	10	4	9	33	31	24
Fulham	22	8	6	8	31	27	22
Queen's Park Rangers...	23	8	6	9	33	34	22
West Ham United	25	8	6	11	31	31	22
Watford	21	8	8	10	21	23	19
Brentford	23	6	7	10	22	28	19
Millwall	24	8	6	12	21	37	18
Swindon	25	8	2	15	30	50	18
Luton	24	7	3	14	31	43	17
Wellingborough	23	5	1	17	28	72	11

Millwall and Swindon are now a point each above Luton, and it may be of interest to take a glance at the remaining engagements of the three clubs. At home, Swindon, who have played one match more than the others, have to meet Portsmouth, Queen's Park Rangers, Tottenham Hotspur, Northampton, and Millwall; the Dockers have to entertain Brighton, Tottenham, Swindon, Wellingborough, Fulham, and Brentford; and Luton have to meet Brentford, Millwall, Brighton, Wellingborough, and Reading.

For their away matches, Swindon have to journey to Brentford, Millwall, Brighton, and Fulham; Millwall have to go to Luton, New Brompton, Southampton, and Swindon; and Luton are due to visit Queen's Park Rangers, Tottenham, New Brompton, Watford, and Northampton. Readers may thus weigh up the chances of the three clubs concerned, and see which is the most likely to be left in the lurch with Wellingborough.

I understand the directors of the Luton Club intend calling a meeting of the supporters in the Plait Hall on Monday week, to consider the question of next season's arrangements.

On Saturday next, Luton will be at home to Brentford. Bob Hawkes is a doubtful starter, owing to the rough usage he received last week in the Cup-tie, and in the event of his being unable to play, Pritchard, of course, will turn out. Lamberton's knee lasted all right against Portsmouth, but he got a nasty kick on the ankle. However, it is expected he will be able to appear as usual. The kick-off is fixed for 3.30.